AVANT GARDE'S PICASSO'S EROTIC GRAVURES

THIS SPECIAL ISSUE OF AVANT-GARDE IS DEVOTED ENTIRELY TO ONE SUBJECT: A SERIES OF EROTIC GRAVURES, OR ENGRAVINGS, BY PABLO PICASSO, THE PRE-EMINENT ARTIST OF OUR TIME. THEY ARE INTENDED TO STAND, AS PICASSO HIMSELF HAS SAID, "AS AN ABIDING CELEBRATION OF LIFE ITSELF."

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AVANT-GARDE WISHES TO THANK THE FOLLOWING MUSEUMS AND GALLERY FOR THEIR COOPERATION IN PREPARING THE SPECIAL PICASSO ISSUE: THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO; GALERIE LOUISE LEIRIS (PARIS); THE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO (TORONTO); KUNSTHAUS (ZURICH); AKADEMIE DER KUNSTE (BERLIN).

ART PHOTOGRAPHY BY GEOFFREY H. CLEMENTS

AVANT GARDE

PICASSO'S EROTIC GRAVURES

INTRODUCTION

Picasso has often likened the production of an artist to the keeping of a personal diary. In his case, the "diary" has been the most powerful, prolific, and astonishing of this or any other century. The latest chapter is particularly astonishing, and particularly joyful —a collection of erotic gravures, or engravings, done in a concentrated burst of creativity from March 16th to October 5th, 1968.

The collection is Picasso's own tribute to the lusty pleasures of Eros: a superb affirmation of sexuality as the renascent force in life and in art. The engravings are uniquely Picasso, in their dazzling variety and awesome technical skill; and Picasso at his wittiest, most personal, and most flamboyant.

Avant-Garde is proud to have been chosen as the medium through which these engravings are to be shown to the world.

The original plates were all made during that prolific period from March to October last year, at Picasso's villa in Mougins on the Riviera. For the seven months, Parisian printers Aldo and Pierre Crommelynck set up a press nearby so that proofs of each plate could be run off immediately and Picasso could see daily results of his work. The printers Crommelynck have remarked on the amazing inventiveness and skill with which Picasso explored the engraving technique. There are great differences in style in these gravures. Some are simple, deft, evocative and detailed, often combining etching, aquatint, and drypoint on a single plate.

Unsigned artist's proofs of the engravings were first shown last winter, at simultaneous exhibitions at the Galerie Louise Leiris in Paris and The Art Institute of Chicago. Further exhibitions of the collection are scheduled this summer and fall—in Toronto, Zurich, Berlin, elsewhere. The market price of the final signed editions, limited to fifty each, is speculatively estimated at ten million dollars; the value of the collection, as a milestone in modern art, is inestimable.

"Art is never chaste," Picasso remarked once. And erotica, as subject matter, is certainly nothing new to Picasso; in a larger sense, all of his work can properly be considered erotic. The sensual man is indivisible from the artist; Picasso's amorous adventures are almost as famous as his art. And his work is "profoundly autobiographical," as his dealer, Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, describes it. "Writing the name of his beloved on his pictures; he has never done anything else."

The names have been legion: Marcelle...Olga ...Marie-Therese...Dora...Francoise...Sylvette... Jacqueline....Their names are as familiar as their faces, recorded in infinite variety by the master. Countless critics have traced, with almost metronomic facility, the parallels between his love life and his work. Wrote his lifelong friend Jaimie Sabartes: "I don't know what Picasso feels, in his innermost heart, about women and about love....As for his love affairs, the only thing I can testify to is their stimulating effect on his painting, which always follows the graph of his love...."

But for many years, Picasso confided his most specific sexual obsessions to a private notebook. Until he decided to create these engravings, sexuality was veiled in symbolism, even abstraction, a private mythological code. Picasso's long identification with the lustful Minotaur, for example, is a richly recurrent theme, presaging much of this new collection. Here, Picasso's familiar confrerie are all reassembled, for unabashedly sexual activity: grandees and clowns, painters and picadors, whores and harlequins, saltimbanques and satyrs. Memory speaks, as well as fantasy: circus figures are recollected from the Cirque Medrano, which Picasso attended constantly with his companions of the early years in Paris; whores from the bordellos of Barcelona, who inspired the landmark *Demoiselles D'Avignon* which launched Cubism over fifty years ago.

The high-spirited wit of these engravings is also intensely personal. Earlier this year, Picasso proudly showed the gravures to his friend David Douglas Duncan, delighted with the private jokes he had so blithely pulled off. Though he portrays himself in many of these etchings, he is most intrigued by the role of spectator—voyeur, if you will—the objective, invisible eye. To Duncan he confided that the artists represented in the artists-and-models series are Rembrandt and Raphael: Raphael fornicating lustily, palette in hand, beret immaculately intact; Rembrandt in various garbs—dunce, viking, a king on his throne—out of the action, mournfully askance.

Picasso jokes, too, with art history. The revolutionary point of Cubism, early in the century, was that one could paint more than the eye could see. A still life was fractured, for example, the slivers spread out on the canvas, so that insides and outsides and profiles of objects could all be viewed simultaneously. Picasso's famous Cubistic women all make this point. In these engravings, Picasso applies the same lesson to female anatomy (traditionally thought of as concealed, as opposed to the male) so that the graceful sexual contortions depicted are also an intricate artistic pun.

Truman Capote predicted that when the world celebrates Picasso's centenary in 1981, Picasso of course will be on hand. "Very likely, on this occasion television will display him in the buff, as befits a god creature quite beyond the laws of human decorum."

But it is 1969. Picasso is only 88. He lives serenely and happily with his wife and companion of the past fifteen years, Jacqueline Roque. One portrait he painted of Jacqueline, in 1954, was significantly titled "Madame Z" —as if, wrote Janet Flanner, "his amorous alphabet had come to its end at last."

If the alphabet has come to an end, its inspiration has not. In these erotic engravings, the supreme artist presents, at last, the supremely sexual man. Here is the statement of the magical Minotaur, the god-man—half bestial, half divine.

To celebrate, we have devoted this entire sixty-page issue of Avant-Garde to the most significant of the 347 erotic engravings Picasso created last year. And we dedicate this volume not only to the engravings but to Picasso himself, the Colossus among us.

To Picasso...to his joy...to many more chapters in his magnificent chronicle.

THE ARTIST AND HIS MODEL

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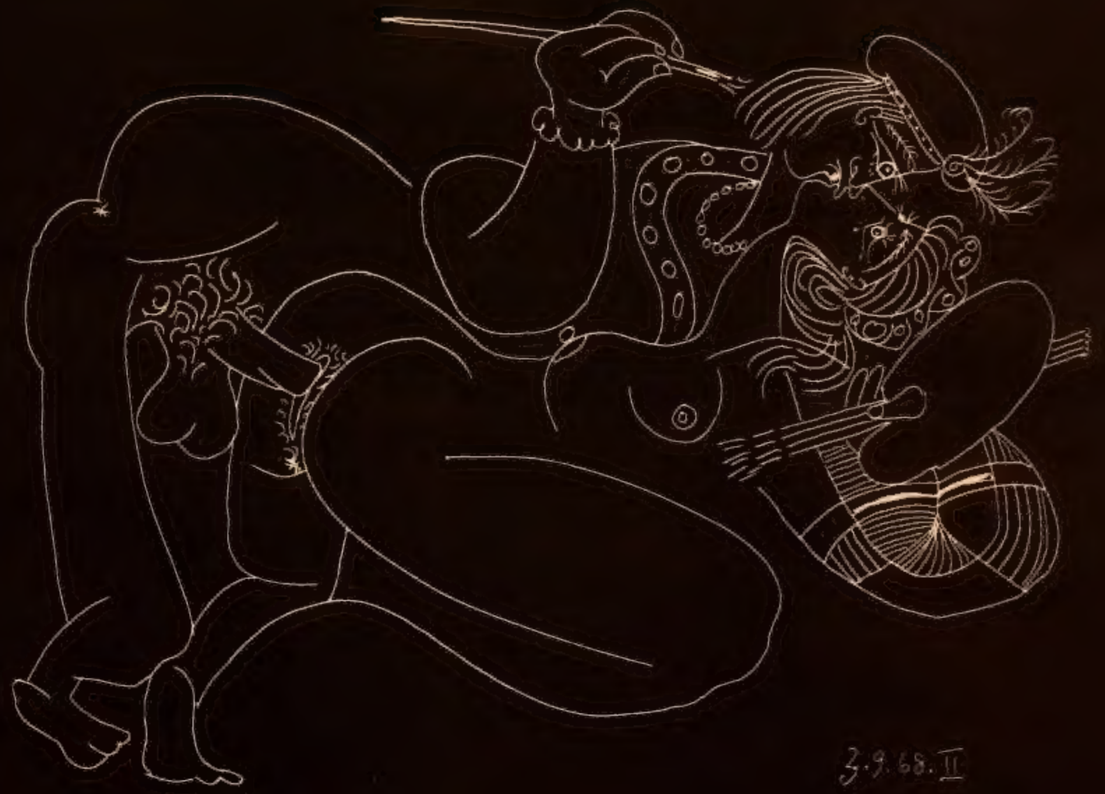

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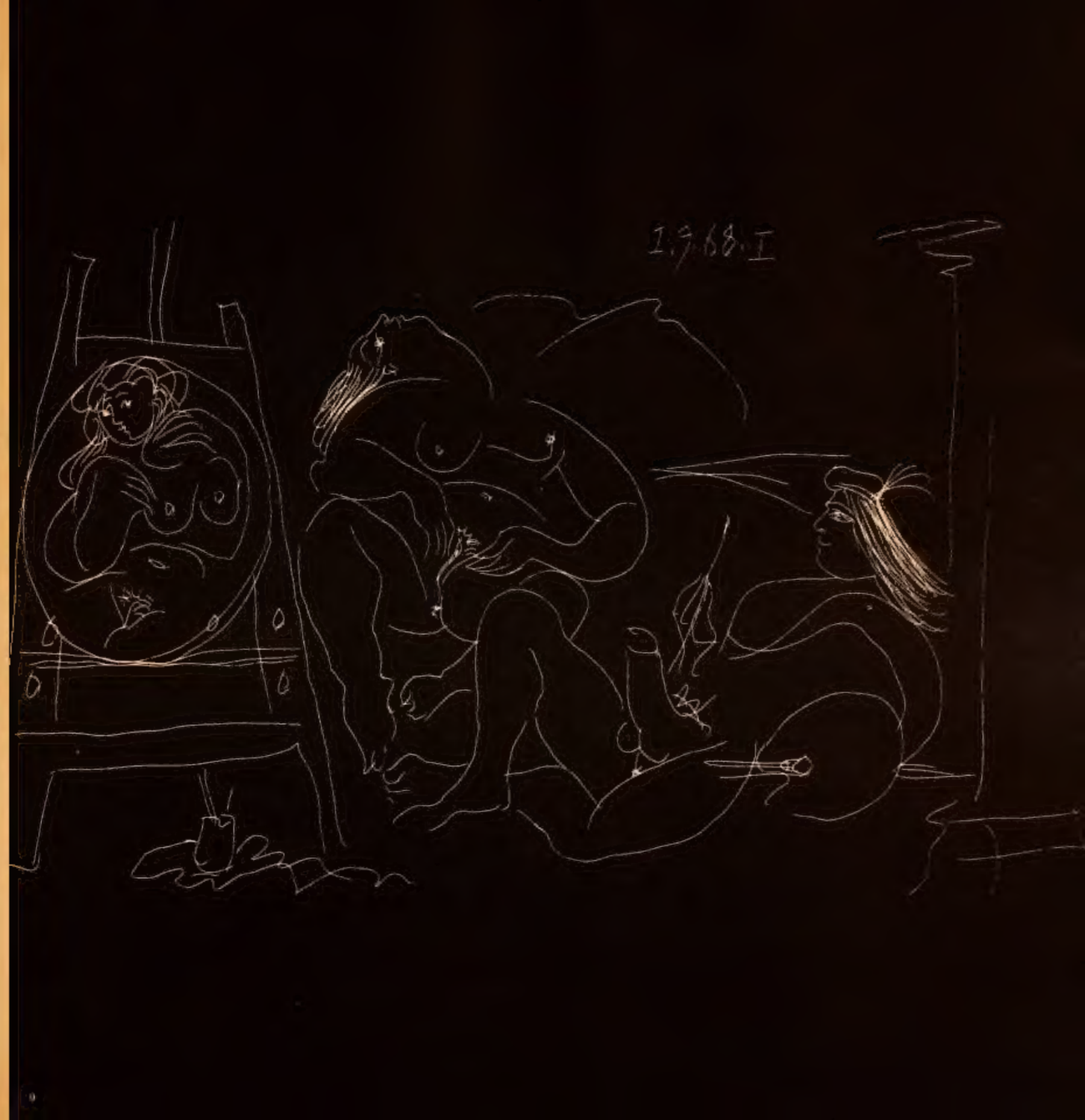
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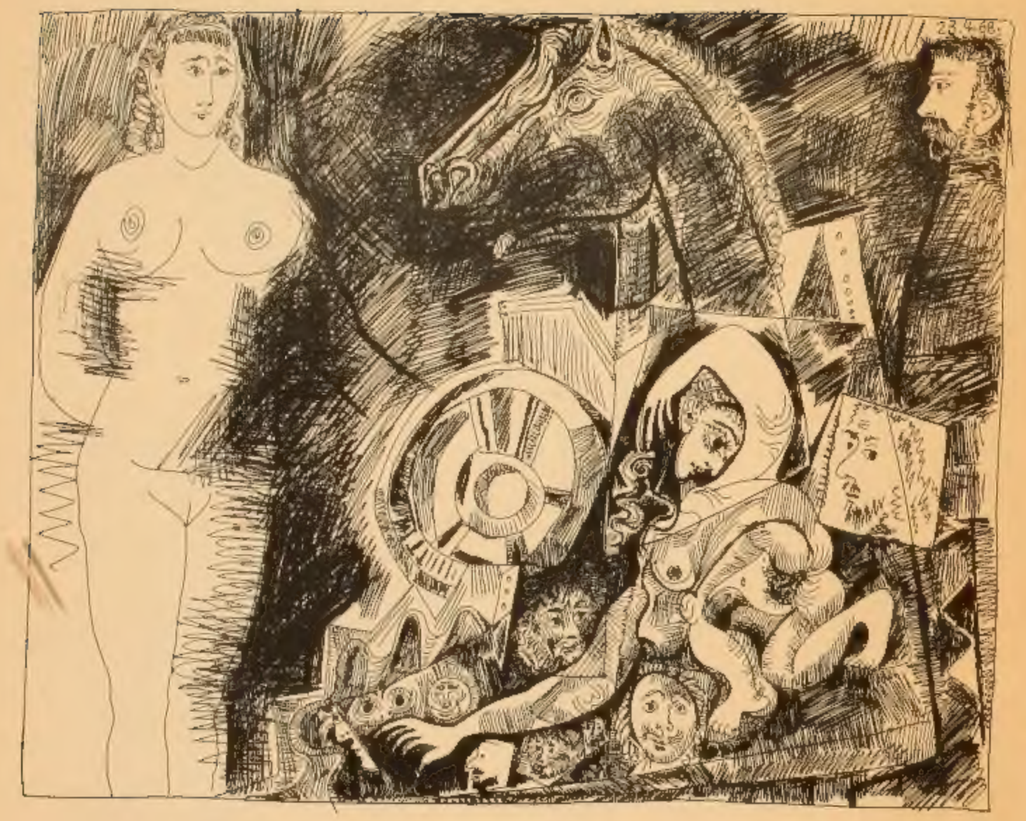
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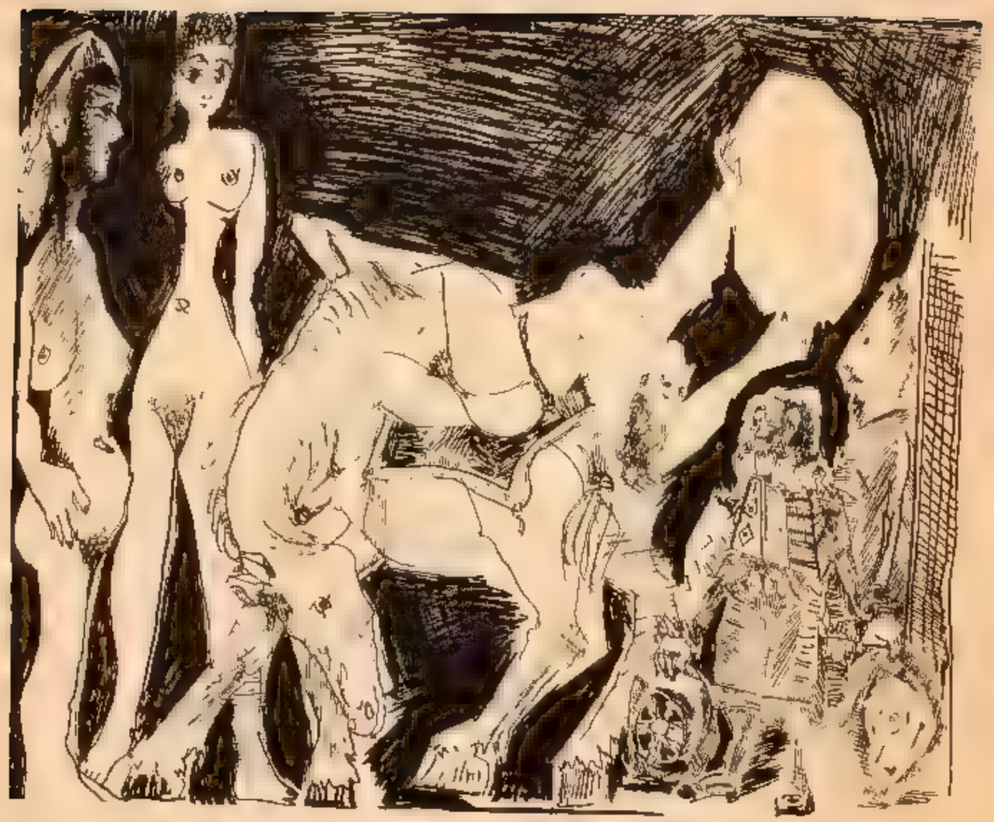

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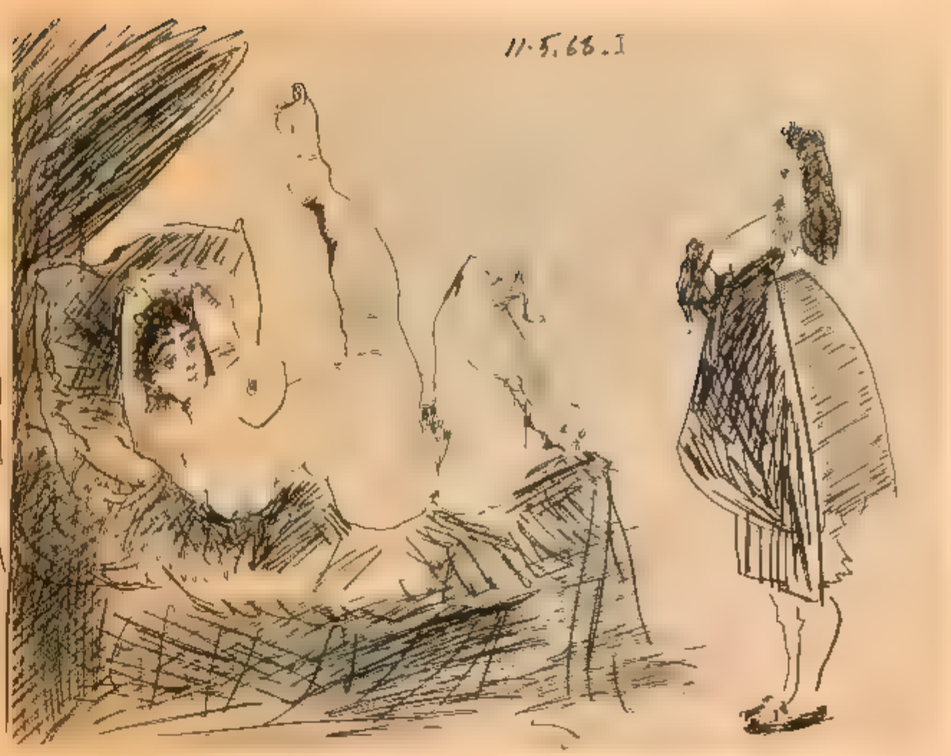
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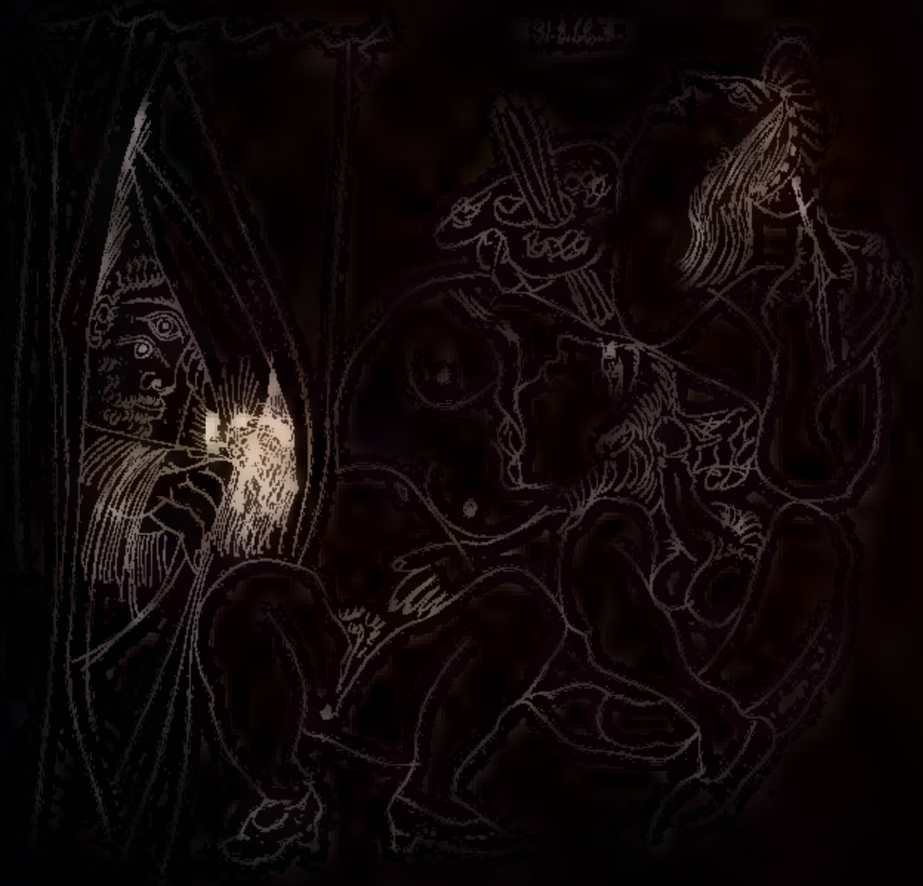

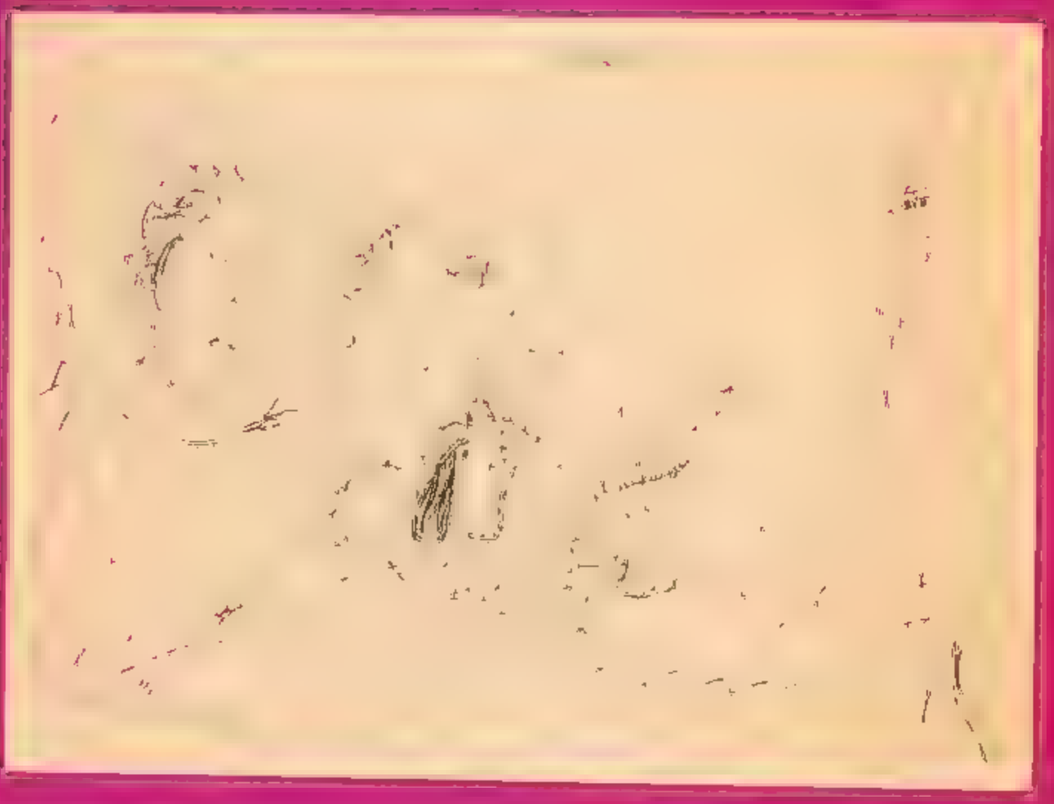

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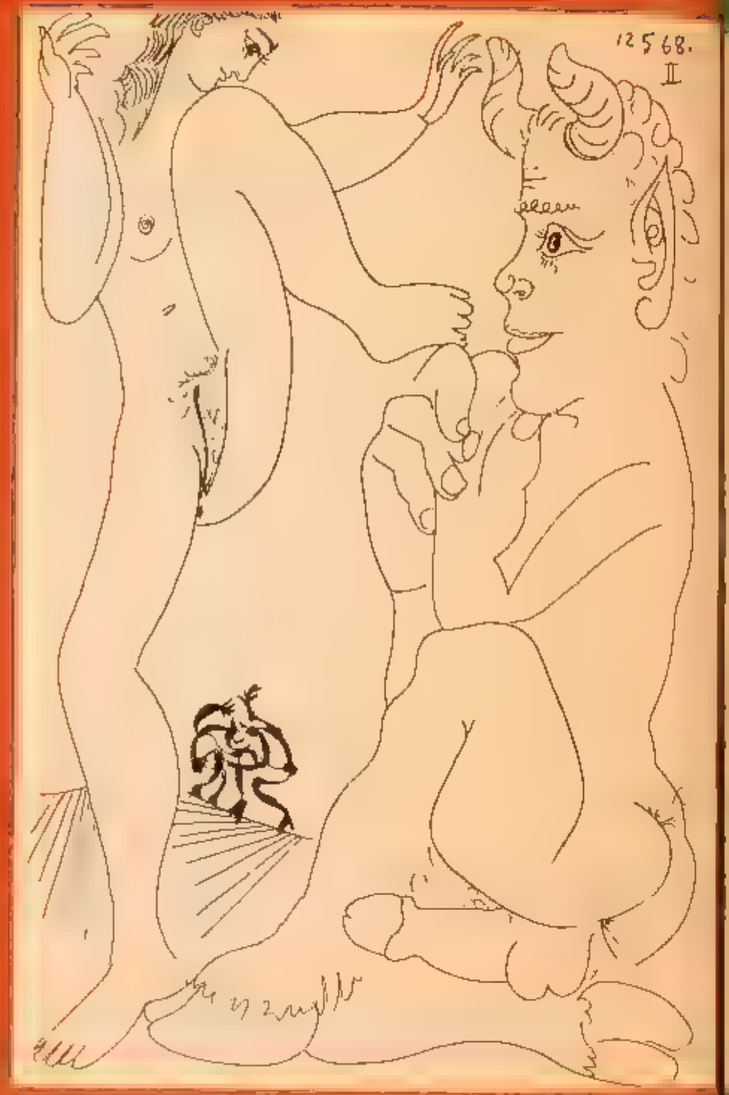
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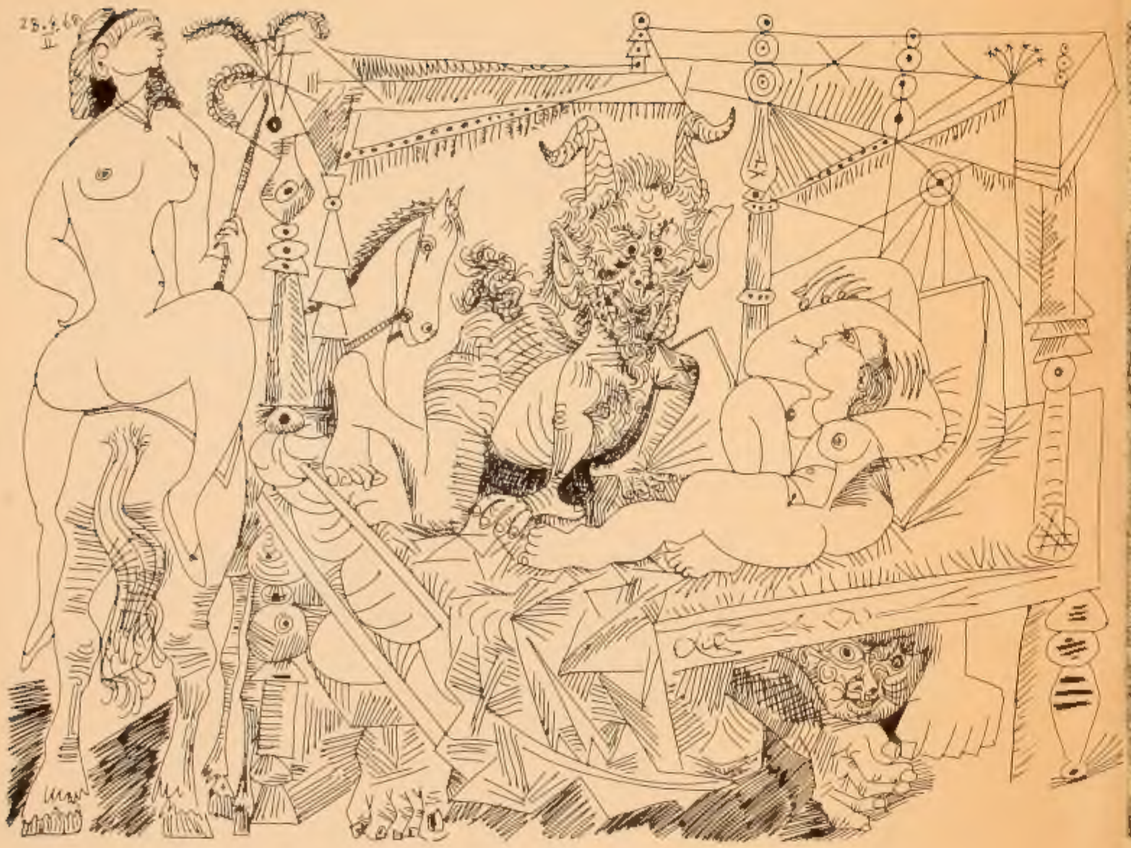

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ARE YOU AVANT-GARDE? ...OR DERRIERE? WHICHEVER, WE THINK YOU'LL LIKE OUR OFFER, SO PLEASE DROP YOUR GARDE AND READ ON

Dear Reader,

As you know, Avant-Garde is dedicated to the future. However, it is not indifferent to the glories of the past. And so we are pleased to announce publication of one of the most devastatingly beautiful volumes in art history: **Nudes of Yesteryear.**

Nudes of Yesteryear is no ordinary artbook; it is the quintessence of over 100 years of classic nude figure photography. It will undoubtedly stand as one of history's most towering tributes to the beauty of the female form.

The creation of **Nudes of Yesteryear** was a formidable undertaking. It required literally thousands of hours of toil (labor of love, you might call it). Researchers were dispatched to libraries, museums, and photo archives on three continents. The world's foremost graphic designer, Herb Lubalin (who happens also to be the art director of Avant-Garde), was retained to design the book. And nothing but the finest craftsmanship—including duotone offset lithography, Kabel typography, and pre-imprinted case-binding, ordinarily found in artbooks costing upwards of $25—was ordered for the book's manufacture.

Like any artbook, **Nudes of Yesteryear** is difficult to describe with words. If, as Confucius said, a picture is worth a thousand words, not even the most comprehensive thesaurus could do justice to **Nudes of Yesteryear**. Moreover, since no volume quite like **Nudes of Yesteryear** has ever appeared before, it defies comparison. Suffice it to say that **Nudes of Yesteryear** is perhaps the most novel, exuberant, and intoxicatingly beautiful volume ever printed—a thing of beauty and a joy forever, if ever there was one.

Of course the chief attraction of **Nudes of Yesteryear** is its women (you might call them its *pièces de résistance*). Whether gracing a velvet divan, gamboling through a wheat field, preening before the mirror of Venus, modeling in an artist's studio, or mounting a street-photographer's donkey, the ladies in **Nudes of Yesteryear** are absolutely sensational! They're bathtub gin, pink-ribbon garters, love in a rumble seat, French post cards, a curtained bed, tumbling in a hayloft, skinny-dipping in the moonlight. They're the kookiest, campiest, most voluptuous, sportive, and daring women ever to cavort before the winking eye of a camera.

Copies of **Nudes of Yesteryear** are being made available to readers of Avant-Garde and to no one else. We have decided upon this policy because the supply of copies is limited and we'd like the book to fall into the hands of those who we believe will appreciate it most—namely, our own readers. To be absolutely certain that this occurs, we are going to make what is probably the most astonishing offer you've ever received in your life: *We're going to send you a copy of* **Nudes of Yesteryear** *ABSOLUTELY FREE!*

That's right: If you will merely extend your Avant-Garde subscription for one year—or enter a new subscription if you are not yet a subscriber—we'll send you a copy of this mirthful, elegant, timeless magnum opus *absolutely free*. Moreover, to make the offer completely irresistible to you, we're going to slash Avant-Garde's standard $10 price to *a mere $6.99!* This is *more than 30% off!!* (You might call the price a "bare minimum.")

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But please hurry. As soon as the present supply of copies of **Nudes of Yesteryear** is exhausted, this offer will automatically be withdrawn. Besides, the ladies in **Nudes of Yesteryear** are not getting any younger.

The Editors

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